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By John Calvin Adams

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ADDRESSED TO THE

DELEGATES FROM THE FREE STATES

TO THE

WHIG NATIONAL CONVENTION.

AT PHILADELPHIA, 1848.

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*To the Delegates from the Free States to the Whig
National Convention :—*

GENTLEMEN : There are occasions in the history of individuals and of parties, when the usual methods of friendly address are felt to be insufficient. The common means of communicating and exchanging opinions, by private conversation or public debate, however well they are suited to ordinary times, are not adapted to a great emergency, when either the subject to be considered, or the person to be addressed, is of such importance that it becomes necessary to use the largest means at our command.

In the present instance, both these circumstances combine. The subject to be considered is of vital importance to the country and to the world. Your relations with it, and your present position in political affairs, make you the proper persons to be addressed. It needs no apology for the step I am taking. Nothing but an irrepressible sense of duty, compelling me to speak, whether I will or no, could induce me to take the trouble to address you. I am not in the way of such things. My course of life is out of the reach of political affairs. I can have nothing to hope and nothing to fear from your deliberations, except as I am interested in the general good, and expect to share in a general misfortune.

I see, or I think I see, that a great outrage is about to be committed on the Constitution and the Morals of the country; and though others, who ought to resist it, sit quietly down with folded hands, and contemplate in silence a calamity which they feel they will mourn

over for years to come, I, with either more courage or less prudence, am ready to meet the threatened danger.

It does not suit my habits to temporize at such times. I see an open and direct road before me, leading to the result, I desire to accomplish ; I may fail of reaching it — I may err in my judgment — but I am prepared for either event.

It is perfectly well known to the electors of this union, that General Zachary Taylor, has been named as a candidate for the first office in the gift of the people. It is perfectly well known, also, to all intelligent persons in the North, what has been done, and how it has been done, to bring this name into the prominence it now occupies. I shall not at this time speak of the means used, here or elsewhere, to influence your determinations at Philadelphia. I am concerned only with results. I somewhat admire the skill and activity which has been displayed in arranging the preliminaries for the contest in the convention. Courage and success, even in a bad cause, command a sort of respect, provided the cause is not too bad, and the success is not attended with disgrace to its heroes, disaster to their friends, and ruin to their country.

It is on this subject that I propose to address you. It involves, in my apprehension, more serious consequences to this country, to the North, and to yourselves, than any question which has arisen since the adoption of our Constitution.

We are on the eve of a crisis in the history of this government. In the heat and turmoil of the battle, individual considerations and zeal for party success may blind many to the true situation of affairs. Personal ambition may dazzle and confound the judgment, and lead away patriotism and duty captive ; but there are some facts and considerations that must have arrested the attention of every one, however much he may be concerned in the issue of the contest.

The approaching Presidential Election will probably decide the future character of our government. Upon

its issue hang questions of Foreign and Domestic Policy, and of Internal Peace and Happiness, of more importance than have yet been connected with any Federal election. Upon it hang, in some sort, the issues of life and death. The ordinary themes of the Tariff, Finance, Commerce, &c., that have usually been the rallying cries of party warfare are not heard at this time. Minor topics like these have sunk out of sight. Towering above them all, and absorbing or overshadowing all, is the one imminent, momentous, threatening question of the SLAVE POWER.

It cannot be disguised, and it ought not to be. This is to be the great issue in the next Presidential campaign: — shall there be a further increase of the Slave Power in the national councils? shall this institution be extended over new territory, or shall it be confined within its present sectional, local, and constitutional limits?

It is to battle for victory in this contest that the political hosts are now marshaling themselves. We may attempt to conceal the fact from ourselves at the North, and try to keep it out of sight by all sorts of political subterfuges; but the South is more bold and more honest. She sees, and admits that she sees, that it is necessary for her purposes, that a Southern Slaveholding whig, who is also in favor of the extension of Slavery, should be thrust upon the North, and that we should be required with our own hands, to set a man over us who will achieve our political subjection, or at least secure the political supremacy of the South. It is required, in this struggle for existence, that the North should commit a political suicide, in order that the South may become her heir at law.

To accomplish this end, the Southern politicians have resorted to the cheap expedient of carrying the war into the enemy's country. They are endeavoring to bring about a state of things in which it will be necessary, or appear to be necessary, for the whigs of the North to unite their force upon a Southern candidate. The more effectually to attain this result, the democratic

wing of the Southern army — the entire South fights under but one banner, no matter how many squadrons she musters for the field — has selected for its leader a renegade citizen of the North-west. It would not answer to nominate a Slaveholder — that would not serve her turn — besides it would be useless. This pitch of infamy was left to the free North. It has been reserved, as the last degree of cowardice and subjugation, for us, after forging our own chains, during several years of wicked legislation upon Texas, Mexico, and Slavery, to fasten them upon our supple limbs, with our own willing hands. And all for what? I blush to say for what — for party success — for personal aggrandisement.

It is to be feared that the whig party of the North will earn for itself, by its conduct in the convention and during the canvass, the unevitable title of — the BETRAYER OF LIBERTY.

What will the intelligent whig party be able to say for itself, when it is inquired of by the lovers of Constitutional liberty at home, and by the friends of Humanity everywhere, what hand it had in perpetuating Slavery and increasing the Slave Power? What answer will the free North give, when it is asked what disposition it has made of the rich legacy of the Revolution? “The blood of our fathers cries to us from the ground, ‘My sons scorn to be slaves.’” The blood of millions of Slaves cries to us from the soil we are about to curse with the horrid institution,—“Fellow-men, do not rivet our chains.”

“Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God ye people of Gomorrah.

“To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he-goats.

“When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands to tread my courts?

“Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

“Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth ; they are a trouble unto me. I am weary to bear them.

“And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you ; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear : *your hands are full of blood.*

“Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil.

“Learn to do well ; seek judgment ; relieve the oppressed , judge the fatherless ; plead for the widow.”—ISAIAH, ch. i.

It is not believed that there is any sincerity, on the part of Southern gentlemen, in the proposition to nominate Mr. Clay for the Presidency. The mention of his name, at the South, and the appearance of an organization in his favor, can be intended for no other purpose than to deceive the Whigs of the North. When the Southern delegates meet in the Convention, they will present an undivided front in support of one man.

Mr. Clay himself undoubtedly is sincere in his attempts to thrust himself on the country again ; but he is a mere tool in the hands of Gen. Taylor's friends, to be played off against a Northern candidate. We have no words to characterize properly Mr. Clay's ambition, and the means he has taken to secure his ends. If he were the gentleman he takes himself to be, he would imitate the generosity of his northern rival in 1844, withdraw his name from the canvass, and set himself heartily to secure the election of Mr. Webster.

But recent events have taught us that the “chivalry of the sunny south,” if it ever existed except in a rhetorical flourish, has long since gone, with the age whose departure Mr. Burke so eloquently lamented. Everything, at least in politics, is selfish, grasping, mean ; and it is so as much as anything because we submit to it, and oftentimes aid and abet it.

“The fault is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.”

It requires no sagacity in Gen. Taylor's friends, or in

any one, to see that Mr. Clay can be beaten at this election more easily and surely than he was in 1844, with the same weapons, and on the same ground.

With Gen. Taylor, however, the case is different. Here the opposition to free principles is firm and decided. This man is held up by the slave holders of the South as a master for the North during the next presidential term. No measure of arrogance and insolence is spared to oblige us to take him. Are we curious to know his opinions on questions, long considered of vital importance in the administration of our government, and upon which every man of ordinary intelligence in the country, who has reached his majority, has formed a judgment, more or less determined — we are slightly informed that Gen. Taylor has no opinions on any subject ; or does not choose to express them, On the great questions of Slavery and the Wilmot Proviso — which more than any others excite the public mind — Gen. Taylor, when respectfully solicited to give an opinion, is dumb. He is a Slave owner — a Slave breeder — and the candidate and warrior of the promoters of the Extension of Slavery.

We may apply to this Military Autocrat, the hero of the murderous Florida war, which disgraced humanity and civilized warfare by the use of Cuba blood hounds, against a weak people fighting for their homes — the hero who is surfeited with honors gained in another war undertaken, as he knew at the beginning, to spread the desolation of military Conquest, and domestic Servitude, over the Free soil of an unoffending sister nation — we may apply, I say, to this proud man, the indignant rebuke of the Declaration of Independence, on the conduct of the British monarch.

“ In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms. Our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.”

There are two capital objections to Gen. Taylor, as a candidate for the Presidency. And here I wish to disclaim any personal feeling against this gentleman. I am ready to accord him all the praise that is due for his military skill. I cannot speak of his general abilities, of his knowledge and experience in the conduct of affairs, of his information in any of the subjects which form what is called the science of government, or of his political principles. I wish I could. If we are to believe his own statement, he is profoundly ignorant on all these topics of prime importance in the administration of affairs. He knows nothing but how to carry on war. His experience is confined to the camp. As for his principles, they are of that easy sort which will probably permit him to administer the government, should he get the opportunity, according to *the Constitution as he understands it*.

These *principles*, and this ignorance, may suit those who are in a condition to follow blind leaders — and this kind of party or no-party tactics may be agreeable to those who are only anxious to find an opportunity of deserting the principles they have hitherto professed, and of betraying the cause of the North into the hands of its enemies.

To such, if there be any, I have nothing to say. The North has been prolific of political Judases of both parties, and the stock is probably not by any means exhausted. I shall be able to address myself to these persons, should there be any such, after their treachery has become known in the proceedings of the Convention.

But the objections to Gen. Taylor take a more definite shape than his principles — they are not as vague as his knowledge.

He is a Military Chieftain — and he is a Slave owner, and in favor of the Extension of Slavery over new territories. On this last point his friends have distinctly spoken for him. He is not in favor of what is called the Wilmot Proviso.

The general objections to a military hero for a President, have been repeatedly urged on the people of the United States. They are familiar to you all, and will immediately suggest themselves to those of you who were engaged in the canvass of 1829. I shall not take this time to call your particular attention to them. It was during this period, that Mr. Clay gave utterance to the following sentiment, which ought never to be forgotten.

“If indeed, we have incurred the Divine displeasure, and if it be necessary to chastise this people with a rod of vengeance, I would humbly prostrate myself before him, and implore him, in his mercy, to visit our favored land with war, with pestilence, with famine, with any other scourge than military rule, or a blind and heedless enthusiasm for mere military renown.”

The smitings of a friend are faithful. Will you, Gentlemen, subject us to the rule of a military man, not like Gen. Jackson, long retired from the camp to private life, but now in the field, at the head of an army, with banners crowned with recent bloody victories?

But the nomination of Gen. Taylor, at this time, is liable to more serious objections, than were ever brought against the nomination of Gen. Jackson. This gentleman was something more than a mere soldier. He had certain fixed opinions, and considerable knowledge and experience of public affairs. He was bred to the bar. He had sat on the bench. He had administered a government. Though a considerable part of his life had been spent in the public service, only a few years had been passed in the camp.

With Gen. Taylor, however, it is different. He is a mere warrior. It is not known that he possesses any knowledge whatever beyond what he has acquired in the military service.

He is, confessedly, selected as the candidate of a certain portion of the Whig party, for no other reason than because he is a military hero, and therefore *available*. Available for what? for a candidate? — or for a wise and safe President?

On this subject, Gentlemen, it becomes you to take heed. It is an awful consideration. You are under a responsibility above and beyond what belongs to your official duties. You are responsible to your successors, to posterity, to the world. By nominating Gen. Taylor, you are debauching the popular mind. You are leading this people to their political destruction.

On this subject, I prefer to quote the opinion of Mr. Webster, who is, to a majority of your Convention, I dare say, a safer guide on all public, Constitutional questions, than Gen. Taylor.

I quote from Mr. Webster's Speech in the Senate, January 14, 1836, on Mr. Benton's Resolutions for appropriating the Surplus Revenue to National Defence.

"Sir, If there be any philosophy in history; if human blood still runs in human veins; if man still conforms to the identity of his nature, the institutions which secure constitutional liberty can never stand long against this excessive personal confidence, against this devotion to men, — in utter disregard both of principle and experience, — which seems to me to be strongly characteristic of our times. This vote came to us, sir, from the popular branch of the legislature; and that such a vote should come to us from such a branch of the legislature, was amongst the circumstances which excited in me the greatest surprise and the deepest concern. Certainly, sir—certainly, I was not, on that account, the more inclined to concur. It was no argument with me, that others seemed to be rushing,—with such heedless, headlong trust, such impetuosity of confidence,—into the arms of executive power. I held back the stronger, and would hold back the longer. I see, or I think I see,—it is either a true vision of the future, revealed by the history of the past, or, if it be an illusion, it is an illusion which appears to me in all the brightness and sunlight of broad noon,—that it is in this career of *man-worship*, marked every furlong by the fragments of other free governments, that our own system is making progress to its close. A personal popularity,—honorably earned, at first, by military achievements, and sustained now by party, by patronage, and by enthusiasm, which looks for no ill, because it means no ill itself,—seems to render men willing to gratify power, even before its demands are made, and to surfeit executive discretion, even in anticipation of its own appetite. * * *

"Mr. President, it is the misfortune of the Senate to have differed with the President on many great questions, during the last four or five years. I have regretted this state of things deeply, both on personal and on public accounts; but it has been unavoidable. It is no pleasant

employment, it is no holiday business, to maintain opposition against power and against majorities ; and to contend for stern and sturdy principle against personal popularity, against a rushing and overwhelming confidence, that, by wave upon wave, and cataract after cataract, seems to be bearing away and destroying whatsoever would withstand it. How much longer we may be able to support this opposition in any degree, or whether we can possibly hold out till the public intelligence and the public patriotism shall be awakened to a due sense of the public danger, it is not for me to foretell. I shall not despair to the last, if, in the meantime, we be true to our own principles. If there be a steadfast adherence to these principles, both here and elsewhere ; if, one and all, they continue the rule of our conduct in the Senate, and the rallying point of those who think with us and support us out of the Senate, I am content to hope on and to struggle on. While it remains a contest for the preservation of the Constitution, for the security of public liberty, for the ascendancy of principles over men, I am willing to bear my part of it. If we can maintain the Constitution, if we can preserve this security for liberty ; if we can thus give to true principle its just superiority over party, over persons, over names, our labors will be richly rewarded. If we fail in all this, they are already among the living who will write the history of this government, from its commencement to its close.”*

These remarkable words, though uttered in 1836, are of powerful application in 1848. The Whigs of the free North adopt them as their watchwords and platform of political action. We mean to “maintain the Constitution, to preserve this security for liberty, to give to true principle its just superiority over party, over persons, over names,” and we do not fear but that “our labors will be richly rewarded.” To this end we are sworn not to submit to even the attempt to elevate Gen. Taylor to the Presidency. We believe that the attempt would be disgraceful, as it will certainly be disastrous. We protest against it, and we mean to act against it. Party organization will not bind us. Our submission to party is one thing ; but our devotion and allegiance to principle is another. We can never be brought to vote for Gen. Taylor, or any other man, who owes his nomination to the spirit of MAX-WORSHIP.

Nothing short of a divine madness can impel that party which now holds in its hands the destiny of the

* Webster's Speeches, vol. 3, pp. 56—58.

nominee of the Convention—I mean the Northern Whig party—to jeopard itself by a leap in the dark. The times call for wise and deliberate action. We have sources of deep anxiety everywhere. Our domestic affairs, under home influences and foreign disturbances, are already in a confused and perplexing state, and require the most masterly and delicate handling.

Abroad, the appearance of things is fearful, threatening to involve us in strange difficulties. Should Europe be engaged in a general war, of which there is now no improbable chance, new relations under extraordinary emergencies will be sure to spring up between us and European powers, calling for something more than mere personal courage and military skill.

If ever the country and the world at large demanded that a great *Civilian* should be at the head of this government, it is now.

And yet in the face of all this, with our Domestic affairs threatening distraction, and our Foreign relations liable at any moment to call for the use of the highest diplomatic skill and knowledge, you are urged to nominate and we may be called upon to support, a person for the Chief Magistracy, who is a mere soldier,—ignorant of civil affairs,—until within a few months unknown to fame,—and now principally distinguished as a successful warrior. He cannot be called a Statesman. He cannot be called a Whig. He has said that he would act independently of the Whig National Convention, and be a President in spite of you, should you not obey his dictation.

It would have shown a decent respect for his Whig constituents of the North, if Gen. Taylor had feigned a little modesty, and, like Caesar and Cromwell, affected to put away the crown he secretly resolved to clutch.

It remains to be seen what sort of stuff the Whigs of the Convention are made of. If they can nominate Gen. Taylor, after this expression of arrogance and contempt—they can do anything.

It may be, gentlemen, that your convention will impose Gen. Taylor on the free North. But I caution

you to beware of it. The consequences will be momentous.

The great whig party of the North, the Conservative, Constitutional party, will be betrayed by its supposed friends. It will go through this canvass with a feeble and divided strength. In the great free states it will be paralyzed, and will stagger to its grave. It will go down in utter defeat and ruin. It will suffer a worse calamity—it will go down in disgrace. It will rise again, however, at the next Presidential Election, like one of the factions of the old French Revolution, to sweep away every opposition in a great, undivided, irresistible, sectional and geographical combination. There will then be but one party. Whigs, Democrats, Liberty-men, Abolitionists and all, will fraternize. They will have the control of the country in their hands. They will rally under the watchword of the Ordinance of '87.

As is natural in such cases, extreme counsels will soon predominate. The compromises of the Constitution will be disregarded, and the political power of the country will be perverted into a means to effect UNIVERSAL EMANCIPATION. The South will not be able to resist the movement, the friends of constitutional liberty at the North cannot control it. I leave you to contemplate the fate of the Union, in this event.

It is confidently believed, however, that Gen. Taylor cannot be elected if he should receive the nomination. He cannot carry the States of Ohio and New York. He cannot carry the State of Massachusetts. Recent events in the Baltimore Convention, the present position of parties in the Empire State, the determination of many whigs of the North to join in the convention at Columbus, in case a Southern candidate should be nominated at Philadelphia,—ought to make you pause and reflect, whether it is safe to venture upon any but a Northern man. It is not enough to say that Gen. Taylor can carry the states of Arkansas and Texas—a grand total of seven votes. It is clear that he can-

not secure the votes of New York and Ohio, an aggregate of fifty-nine votes.

A single glance at the state of the Electoral College will satisfy any one that Gen. Taylor cannot be elected without the votes of the great free states: *These he cannot obtain.*

I wish to ask you, Gentlemen, representatives of the Free North, if you are aware of the situation of public affairs, and of the position you now occupy? It is a sound principle of law that a man shall be held responsible for all the ordinary consequences of his acts. Are you ready to assume the responsibility, at this time, in this emergency, of nominating a Military man and a Slave Holder, and Slavery Promoter for the Presidency?

Let not the sad spectacle be exhibited to the world, of citizens of Christian States pledged by their public policy, their general spirit, their benevolent institutions, through a long course of years, to the spread of free principles, committing those states to the policy of riveting forever the chains of slavery over the free soil of a sister Republic. General Taylor will be nominated to effect this purpose.

He will not be supported by the whigs of the North.

It seems to be apparent in this emergency, Gentlemen, that your nomination should fall but upon ONE MAN. The wants of the country, the wishes of the lovers of Constitutional liberty, point to but ONE MAN—the great Statesman and Civilian, DANIEL WEBSTER.

You may be assured that he can be elected if he can secure the nomination. No other man can carry as many Northern States, and he will carry as many Southern States as any other Whig. Mr. Webster is with the country, and the country is with him, on all questions of Foreign and Domestic Policy, the Tariff, Finance, Commerce, &c., and above all, on the great question of the further increase of the Slave Power.

It is believed, Gentleman, that if the Whigs of the North show a proper determination, they can secure the elevation of Mr. Webster. He is understood to be

the only man of the free States who can command the respect and confidence of the Southern Whig party. The most prominent conservative politicians of the South have expressed a hope that the North would be true to herself at this time. Will you disappoint the reasonable expectations of the friends of liberty, and the supporters of Constitutional Government? Let there be no wavering, none of the contemptible expediency doctrine, which leads men to declare in one breath that Mr. Webster is their first choice, and to say the next moment that they are ready to vote for General Taylor. This amounts to nothing more nor less than saying, "We will vote in Convention for any man you please to insist on."

Let the friends of Constitutional liberty stand firm, and insist with a becoming spirit on the rights of the Free States.

If they fail in this high duty, "they are already among the living who will write the history of the *Whig Party*, from its commencement to its close."

A WHIG OF THE FREE STATES.







